

Q&A

SANDER DE BRUIJN, DESIGN TEAM LEAD, EFTELING THEME PARK, NETHERLANDS

INTERVIEW BY Juliet Dennis

Q. What's your daily routine?

A. I like to get up early and take advantage of the peace and quiet in the park in the morning – I always notice things that I want to do something with. Then I can be found at my desk. As a team lead, I regularly consult with colleagues from different disciplines – our shared goal is to create unique, fairytale experiences for our guests.

Q. How do you go about creating a new ride?

A. We often use customer research to identify guests' needs and desires, which we then use to dream up new ideas. We ask ourselves several questions: which other stories can we tell at Efteling? What sort of world do we want to create? What kind of unique adventure do we want guests to experience? Slowly, new ideas start to emerge, and from that, we create something magical.

Q. What can you tell us about new ride The Six Swans, which opened in September?

A. The Six Swans is the 30th attraction to join Efteling's Fairytale Forest and the first to be combined with a mini ride. It's themed around the story of a king and six sons, whom the new, jealous queen turns into swans. To break the spell, their sister Elisa has to knit shirts from aster flowers, without speaking for six years. On the ride, guests visit the vaults of a secret castle, where they see Elisa knitting silently amid a forest of asters. Guests of all ages can ride on the back of one of the six swans or walk



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through the castle; visitors who do will become part of the story.

Q. What was the inspiration behind the ride and how long did it take to develop?

A. In our archive, I found a sketch of The Six Swans by Anton Pieck, and it's always stayed in my head. I started researching the story and it fascinated me enormously. I loved that Elisa knitted shirts from flowers – it's so poetic. The castle had to fit in with the Efteling architecture, but it also had to be different from the existing castles of Sleeping Beauty and Snow White's stepmother. I took inspiration from lots of sources, but the main one was the picturesque German city of Rothenburg ob der Tauber.

Q. How many people does it take to create a new ride?

A. The castle was built on site by a



PICTURES: Rene Van der Hulst

SANDER'S TOP TIP

Stick around for the end of the day to experience the park at its quietest. This is my favourite time to see The Six Swans ride – it's especially magical when the sun starts to set.

team of our own staff and specialists – about 50 team members from architectural design, decoration, the costume studio and landscaping were involved. I'm constantly looking at the story experience from a visitor's point of view – whether visitors choose to walk or ride the swans in the castle, they see the scene with sparkling asters and dew droplets. The story experience and all the details are important, so I was checking this throughout the construction process. We're only satisfied when something is completely right.

Q. What do you love most about your job?

A. Creating something from nothing,

as part of a team, is a magical process. The best part is when we're ready to show our guests that latest dream in all its glory – that's really special.

Q. Your job sounds like every child's dream. Is it something you always aspired to do?

A. When I was a child, I visited Efteling and saw the fairytale book with the illustrations by Pieck. My father told me that the attractions in the Fairytale Forest were based on some of those drawings. From that moment on, I wanted to make those drawings and then bring them to life. It really is a child's dream come true for me. **TW**